

Quarter-life Crisis Episodes in Emerging Adulthood: A Mixed-Methods Analysis of Data From Eight Countries



Emerging Adulthood
2025, Vol. 13(6) 1491–1506
© 2025 Society for the
Study of Emerging Adulthood
and SAGE Publishing



Article reuse guidelines:
sagepub.com/journals-permissions
DOI: 10.1177/21676968251380890
journals.sagepub.com/home/eax



Oliver C. Robinson¹ , Nikolay Petrov², Georgios Vleioras³ ,
Figen Çok⁴, H. Kübra Özdoğan⁴ , Zehra Yeler⁵ , Kübra Berber⁶ ,
Katarina Millova⁷ , Saba Sajjad⁸, Luciana Dutra-Thomé⁹ ,
Maria Nugraheni Mardi Rahayu¹⁰ , Afinnisa Rasyida¹¹ ,
Nindya Putri Aprodita¹² , Shefali Mishra¹³ , Payal Sharma¹³,
Akancha Srivastava¹⁴, Irini Dermitzaki³ , Anastasia Spyrou³ ,
Emmanouela Mante³ , Ume Laila¹⁵, and Amy Fisher¹⁶

Abstract

Developmental crisis episodes that occur during emerging adulthood, also known as quarter-life crises, are emotionally unstable times of transition that typically last around a year or two. This study aims to expand the cross-cultural focus on this topic, by assessing prevalence and brief written descriptions of early adult crisis in 18–29-year-olds from eight countries (UK, Greece, Czechia, Turkey, India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Brazil), with a total sample of $N = 2,247$, with the objective of exploring similarities and differences across cultures. Crisis prevalence rates found ranged from 40% to 77% per country. Thematic analysis of descriptions of crisis elicited external and internal crisis features. With regards to external features, the most prevalent were career transition, financial difficulties, studying-based stress and struggle, and family difficulties. Internal features that were most prevalent were feeling fearful/anxious/worried, negative self-evaluation, feeling sad/down, and feelings of confusion/uncertainty. The findings align with existing research on early adult crisis, pointing to both cross-cultural similarities and differences.

Keywords

crisis, emerging adulthood, early adulthood, quarter-life crisis, qualitative, brief text, structured tabular thematic analysis, mixed-methods

¹School of Human Sciences, University of Greenwich, UK

²Department of Psychology, University of Cambridge, UK

³Department of Primary Education, University of Thessaly, Greece

⁴Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling, Başkent University, Ankara, Turkey

⁵Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling, TED University, Ankara, Turkey

⁶Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling, Ankara University, Ankara, Turkey

⁷Department of Psychology, University of Ostrava, Czechia

⁸Department of Clinical Psychology, International Institute of Science Arts and Technology, Pakistan

⁹Institute of Psychology, Universidade Federal da Bahia, Brazil

¹⁰Faculty of Psychology, Satya Wacana Christian University, Indonesia

¹¹Faculty of Psychology, University of Surabaya, Indonesia

¹²Psychology Study Program, Bunda Mulia University, Indonesia

¹³Department of Psychology, Christ University, Bangalore, India

¹⁴Jindal School of Psychology & Counselling, O.P. Jindal Global University, India

¹⁵Humanities and Social Sciences Department, GIFT University, Pakistan

¹⁶South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, UK

Corresponding Author:

Oliver C. Robinson, School of Human Sciences, University of Greenwich, Park Row, London, SE10 9LS, UK.

Email: o.c.robinson@gre.ac.uk

Introduction

The theoretical proposition that crisis episodes are normative and functional features of human development was originally put forward by theorists in the 1960s, including Caplan (1964), Dąbrowski (1964), Erikson (1968) and Forer (1963). These theorists argued that development oscillates between stable periods of structural coherence and unstable periods of structural incoherence. These unstable periods, they claimed, often lead to acute episodes of crisis, which have developmental functions, one of which is the loosening of prior mental and behavioral patterns and structures to facilitate a breakthrough into new patterns and structures (Dąbrowski, 1964; Levinson, 1978, 1996). Crises can therefore be construed as bringing potential for change and growth (Caplan, 1964; Hasyim et al., 2024; Slaikeu, 1990).

Early adult crisis episodes (also referred to as quarter-life crisis episodes) typically occur between the ages of 20 and 29 (Agarwal et al., 2020; Duara et al., 2021), although they can manifest in the 18–19 and 30–35 age range too (Robinson & Smith, 2010a). Research studies from the UK, India, Czechia, Turkey and Indonesia have found that early adult crises occur across a range of cultures. In all these cultures, crises tend to revolve around struggles with relationship, career, studying or finance, and an accompanying sense of uncertainty, confusion and transition (Çok et al., 2023; Hasyim et al., 2024; Millová & Svárovská, 2020; Robinson & Wright, 2013). In terms of cross-cultural differences in early adult crisis, only one prior study that we are aware of has compared samples across countries, which is an interview-based study of young adults in the UK and India (Duara et al., 2021). The authors found that the Indian participants referred to difficulties with family responsibilities more than the English participants, which the authors relate to the more collectivist norms of Indian culture.

Research suggests that negative emotions are amplified during crisis episodes, particularly anxiety, linked to uncertainty about the future that is perceived as threatening (Agarwal et al., 2020; Duara et al., 2021; Suyono et al., 2021; Zibrinyiová & Ráciová, 2016). One study also found a link between early adult crisis and suicidal ideation in a small number of participants (Alfaruqy & Indrawati, 2023). Crises that involve goals being perceived as unachievable can bring a negative sense of being *locked-out* of adult opportunities, while those that commence when in jobs or relationships that are experienced as oppressive or unfulfilling lead to a feeling of being *locked-in* to commitments, along with a desire to change these and start over (Robinson, 2015, 2019).

Questions of identity and self are also linked to early adult crisis. For example, data from Twitter posts about a quarter-life crisis found that episodes were linked to negative self-evaluations and negative appraisals of one's life situation (Agarwal et al., 2020). A qualitative study from Indonesia found that inhibited self-exploration was experienced as leading to quarter-life crisis (Jamain et al., 2023). A search for an authentic expression of self is also central to the process of early adult crisis, as young adults

seek a way of living that reflects their goals and values but allows them to fit in to society too (Marcia, 1993; Robinson & Smith, 2010b). With regard to perceived effects of early adult crisis, a UK study found that the majority reported subsequent growth, along with development of personal strength, resilience and a more authentic sense of self, while a minority reported post-crisis decline (Robinson & Wright, 2013).

The prevalence of early adult crisis has been estimated by various studies. In terms of current crisis appraisal prevalence, a study in the UK with participants aged 20–39 found that 22% reported being currently in a crisis episode, with a further 35% saying that they might be going through one (Robinson et al., 2017). In a sample of Czech young adults aged 21–30 years, prevalence estimates of current crises were higher; the results indicated that 51% of respondents were in an early adult crisis, 26% of respondents in a partial crisis, and 23% of respondents not in a crisis (Millová & Svárovská, 2020). Meanwhile, one study in Indonesia found a current crisis prevalence rate of 43% (Herawati & Hidayat, 2020), while another in Indonesia found 86% reporting a crisis (Riyanto & Arini, 2021). In a Turkish sample, 42.8% of participants reported experiencing crisis; 38.7% of them reported partial crisis, and 18.5% of them reported no crisis (Yeler et al., 2021).

Early Adult Crisis and Emerging Adulthood

Early adult crisis has been conceptually linked to the theory of emerging adulthood. The theory was developed to describe and explain the challenges faced by young adults within the contemporary socio-economic context of Western countries (Arnett, 2000). Central to this change is that adulthood in the West has become more ambiguous in terms of when adulthood is achieved, due to de-synchronization of economic and social adult statuses (Moffitt, 1993), while entry into adult work roles, parenthood and marriage has been postponed for the majority, leading to an extended period of adult non-committal exploration (Arnett, 2007; Setterstein & Ray, 2010).

Beyond these demographic features, emerging adulthood is highly heterogeneous in terms of the paths that young adults take through it (Nelson, 2021). Within this inherent diversity, five common psychosocial features can often be seen at the individual level, which capture the liminal and unpredictable nature of this life phase. These are (1) identity exploration via imaginal and active means, (2) instability of roles and relationships, (3) a confusing and ambiguous sense of feeling caught in-between adolescence and adulthood, (4) a notable focus on self as young adults build their future and make big decisions, and (5) an optimistic and proactive focus on future possibilities. The cross-cultural applicability of emerging adulthood has growing evidence, including in European and non-Western countries. Evidence of an emerging adulthood phase, including these features alongside varied pathways through this age range, has been found in countries including Greece (Galanaki & Sideridis, 2018; Vleioras & Galanaki, 2024), Turkey (Çok & Atak, 2015),

Czechia (Macek et al., 2016), India (Choudhury & Raghavan, 2014; Mitra & Arnett, 2021), Indonesia (Alfaruqy & Indrawati, 2023), Brazil (Dutra-Thomé & Koller, 2019) and Pakistan (Numan et al., 2024).

Early adult crisis episodes show certain features of emerging adulthood in an amplified or exacerbated form. For example, in terms of identity exploration, there are acute identity shifts and identity reconstruction in episodes of early adult crisis (Robinson & Smith, 2010b). With regards to the characteristic of instability, periods of early adult crisis represent times of extreme social and economic instability that challenge the capacity of young adults to cope (Ranganathan et al., 2022). In terms of the self-focus and future-focus of emerging adulthood, early adult crisis is associated with high levels of intrapersonal curiosity and a search for meaning by way of considering and questioning matters of future purpose (Robinson, 2019; Robinson et al., 2017).

The struggle with personal goals and purpose in early adult crisis links to the challenges of transitioning out of emerging adulthood into a more stable and committed adult life structure (Robinson, 2015). Goals to gain a career, become financially independent, enter long-term relationships and create a stable residential situation, which together represent a transition beyond emerging adulthood, may be either thwarted by challenging circumstances, or achieved yet found to be dissatisfying (Robinson et al., 2013).

The Current Study: Aims and Research Questions

At the time of writing, research that compares the prevalence and features of early adult crisis episodes across more than one culture remains limited to a single published study (cf. Duara et al., 2021). To broaden the comparative cross-cultural scope of early adult crisis research, and to help develop models of early adult crisis to make them more cross-culturally valid, the current mixed-methods study aimed to gain quantitative prevalence estimates of crisis, and brief written accounts of early adult crisis, from eight countries: UK, Greece, Czechia, Turkey, India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Brazil. These countries were selected for three reasons; The first reason is that they have existing literature on emerging adulthood and/or early adult (quarter-life) crisis, which ensures there is a precedent for investigating the phenomenon we are studying. The second reason is that the countries cover a diverse range of socio-economic environments and cultures. The third reason was pragmatic. The UK-based team reached out to a larger number of countries who fitted the above criteria, and it was teams from these seven non-UK countries that responded positively and were in a position to contribute within the required timeframe and resource envelope.

The three research questions that directed the inquiry were as follows:

- (1) What is the prevalence of self-reported developmental crisis episodes in emerging adults across the UK, Greece, Czechia, Turkey, India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Brazil?

- (a) Based on the research reviewed above that includes data on prevalence of early adult crisis, by averaging across studies, we predicted that all countries would have a prevalence of 30% or more.
- (2) What emotions and events are conveyed within brief written descriptions of these crisis episodes?
- (3) How do the written emotions and events compare in content and frequency across the participating countries?

Methods

Participants and Recruitment Strategy

Participants were recruited in the eight participating countries by separate research teams from each country. The two inclusion criteria were that participants must be aged 18–29 years of age and living in the country in question (UK, Greece, Czechia, Turkey, India, Pakistan, Indonesia and Brazil). The age range was selected to fit with a commonly used age range for sampling emerging adults (Arnett et al., 2014). In the UK, participants were offered a £5 shopping voucher for participation. In other countries, participation was not financially incentivized. 2,247 individuals provided data relevant to the current study between October 2023 and October 2024. Figure 1 provides a breakdown of demographic frequencies in the dataset for each country.

Measures and Qualitative Data Collection

The study employed a convergent mixed-methods design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2017), in which quantitative and qualitative data were collected simultaneously and then combined to provide complementary information about early adult crisis. We collected quantitative prevalence data and qualitative data about the experience of the crisis through an online survey platform. The use of brief written texts from participants allows for anonymous open-ended exploration of the contents of crisis across a relatively large sample (Terry & Braun, 2017). The questionnaire included a closed-ended vignette-style question assessing the presence of developmental crisis, the *Crisis Definition and Question (CDQ)*. The CDQ provides a brief definition of crisis then asks participants to state whether they are or aren't experiencing a crisis episode by way of a Yes/No endorsement. This crisis self-assessment has been used in past studies and has been shown to have good predictive validity (Robinson et al., 2017; Robinson & Wright, 2013). The English wording used is as follows:

“A crisis episode is a period in adult life that is noticeably more difficult, stressful and unstable than normal, and is an important turning point in your life due to changes that occur during it. Crisis episodes typically last for several years, but may be shorter or longer.”

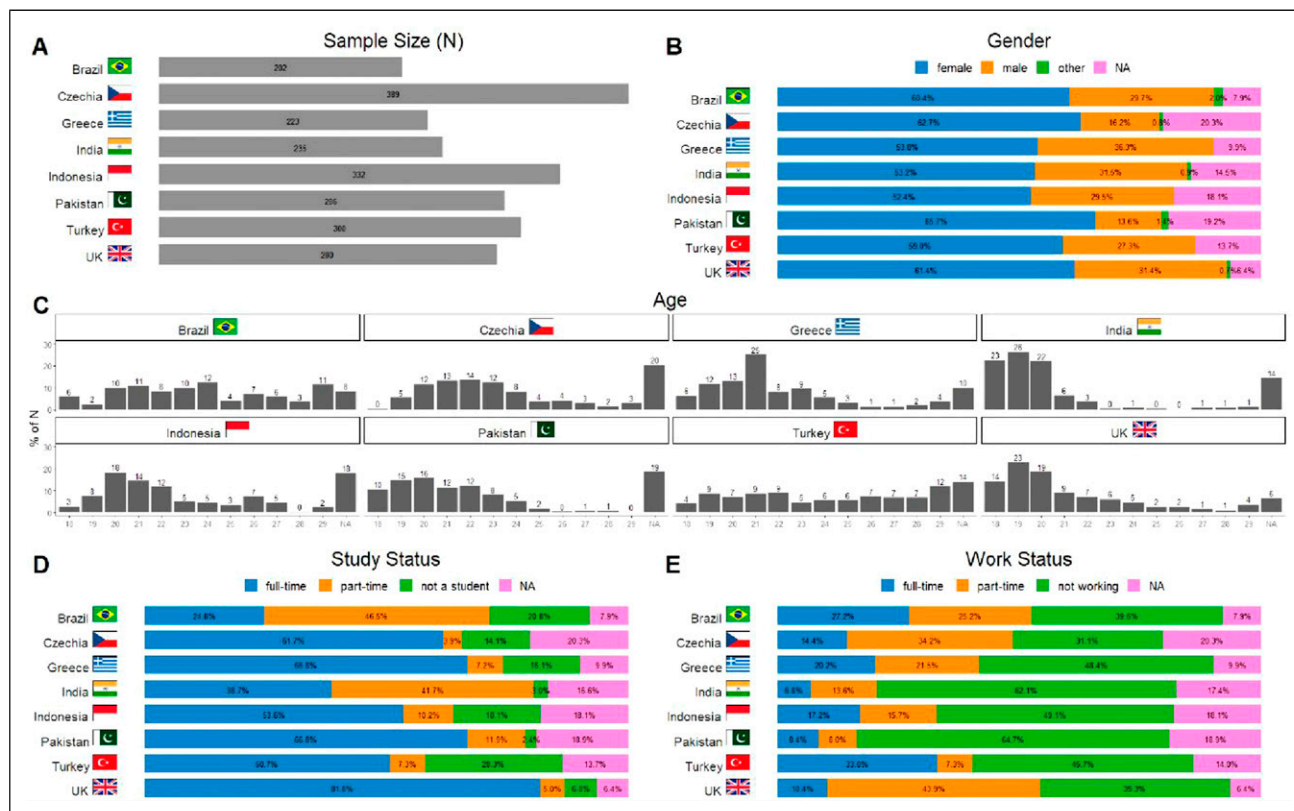


Figure 1. Demographic Details of the Sample ($N = 2,247$)

Would you say that you are currently experiencing a crisis episode in your life? Yes/No

Following that, participants who responded *yes* to the above question were presented with two open-ended questions about the experience of the crisis, as follows:

“Please describe the main events and external situations in your life that have been part of the crisis you are currently experiencing, in 1-3 sentences.”

“Please describe the emotions that you have been feeling and the thoughts you have been thinking about yourself during the crisis you are currently experiencing, in 1-3 sentences.”

The English questions were translated into the relevant languages for each participating country other than the UK. This was done in multiple stages (Tsang et al., 2017). First, a forward translation was done by two independent individuals who were native to the target language and fluent in English, followed by a consensus meeting. Second, a back-translation was done of the translated version from the first stage back to English from two new individuals, fluent in both languages, independently, after which they met to discuss and reach a consensus. Translations were reviewed by all four individuals involved in the translations, as well as 1–2 additional collaborators.

Ethical approval for the study was received from the University of Greenwich (application ref: 22.4.5.10).

Qualitative Analysis

The study employed Structured Tabular Thematic Analysis (ST-TA) to analyse the data. This form of thematic analysis is designed to analyse brief texts such as those elicited by open-ended questionnaires (Robinson, 2022). It draws on both the reflexive thematic analysis of Braun and Clarke (2006) and the ecumenical thematic analysis of Boyatzis (1998), and can be conducted in inductive, deductive and hybrid forms. The phases for analysis in ST-TA are as follows: Phase A: *A Priori* Theme Selection (Deductive and Hybrid Only); Phase B: Deep Immersion in the Data; Phase C: Generating Initial Codes and Themes (Inductive and Hybrid Only); Phase D: Tabulating Themes Against Data Segments; Phase E: Checking Inter-analyst Agreement; Phase F: Exploring Theme Frequencies; Phase G: Developing Thematic Maps and Diagrams; Phase H: Producing the Report.

For the current study, given the volume of data to be coded, we took an inductive-deductive sequential approach. Themes were developed inductively based on the UK data by two members of the UK research team. Research teams based in the other seven countries were then asked to scrutinise the themes and their data from a deductive perspective and

consider if the themes provided a comprehensive coding scheme, or if any changes were required, based on the discursive approach to agreement seeking (selected given the number of individuals involved, as the aforementioned agreement check calculation process works with 2 individuals). Following incorporation of some minor additions and edits, a final scheme was then submitted to an agreement-level check. Agreement-checking was conducted via two analysts independently analyzing a randomly selected sample of texts and aiming for 80% agreement. This was conducted for the current study with the two primary analysts, with a sample of 30 narratives for the emotions theme and with another 30 scripts for the event themes. The first agreement check led to 76% agreement for events and 77% for emotions. Following this, the two analysts met and refined theme names, theme descriptions and combined two themes into a single theme. After that, an agreement check was run again, showing 91% agreement on events, and 83% on emotions. Following this, the two primary analysts along with four more members of the core research team coded the data into themes.

All data from the study are available on the Open Science Framework via the following link: <https://osf.io/bxmez/>.

Results

Our first aim was to determine how prevalent self-reported developmental crisis episodes were in the eight national samples. Figure 2 shows the prevalence of developmental crisis within each national sample, expressed as a percentage frequency of all who responded to the crisis vignette-question in that country. As can be seen, the *Yes* response varied from 77.1%

(Indonesia) to 40.4% (Greece). Therefore, our descriptive hypothesis that crisis prevalence would be 30% or more in all countries was supported. A 2×8 Chi Square test determined that the differences found across the countries were statistically significant, $\chi^2(7, N = 2,247) = 136.49, p < .001, \phi_c = .25$. Post-hoc pairwise chi-square tests, adjusted for multiple tests using the Benjamini-Hochberg procedure (Benjamini & Hochberg, 1995), were also conducted between each pair of countries – see Table 1.

Our second aim was to investigate the content of brief written descriptions of crisis, and to compare these qualitatively across countries. Brief text qualitative data for external crisis features and internal crisis features were collected as responses to different questions and analyzed separately. We found that for both internal and external feature themes, the same set of themes was sufficient for all countries in coding 90%+ of the textual content of the texts for emotions and events, suggesting considerable cross-cultural thematic coherence in brief accounts of early adult crisis. Themes are briefly described below, with example quotes. For the reader wishing to see more data for each theme, all textual data is available via the open-source data repository provided.

External Crisis Features

There are 18 external crisis feature themes, organized into four meta-themes of *Personal, Relational, Work/Study Based* and *Geopolitical*. Table 2 shows the frequency of these themes across countries, written as a percentage of participants within each country who wrote brief texts. The percentages convey how common the themes are within each country. Each theme is briefly described below with example quotes.

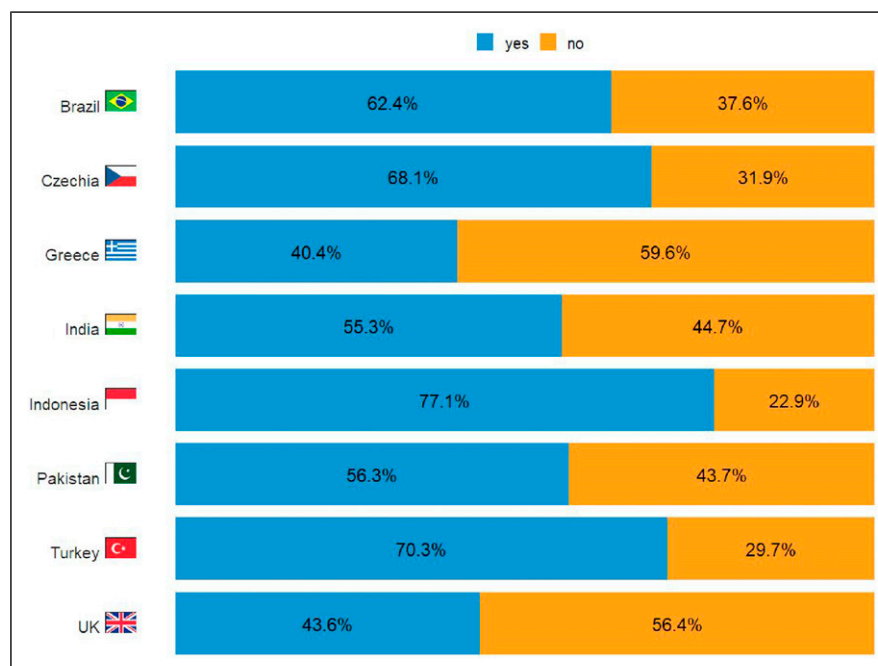


Figure 2. Prevalence of Yes/No Responses to Self-Report Measure of Developmental Crisis

Table 1. Results from Post-Hoc Chi-Square Test Between Each Pair of Countries

Countries	N	χ^2	ϕ_c	<i>p</i>	
Brazil	Czechia	591	1.71	.06	.222
Brazil	Greece	425	19.69	.22	<.001
Brazil	India	437	1.95	.07	.198
Brazil	Indonesia	534	12.67	.16	<.001
Brazil	Pakistan	488	1.57	.06	.236
Brazil	Turkey	502	3.11	.08	.099
Brazil	UK	482	15.87	.19	<.001
Czechia	Greece	612	43.72	.27	<.001
Czechia	India	624	9.8	.13	.003
Czechia	Indonesia	721	6.77	.10	.014
Czechia	Pakistan	675	9.41	.12	.004
Czechia	Turkey	689	.29	.02	.612
Czechia	UK	669	39.25	.25	<.001
Greece	India	458	9.67	.15	.003
Greece	Indonesia	555	75.18	.37	<.001
Greece	Pakistan	509	12.10	.16	.001
Greece	Turkey	523	45.83	.30	<.001
Greece	UK	503	.40	.03	.567
India	Indonesia	567	29.07	.23	<.001
India	Pakistan	521	.02	.01	.893
India	Turkey	535	12.21	.15	.001
India	UK	515	6.59	.12	.014
Indonesia	Pakistan	618	29.39	.22	<.001
Indonesia	Turkey	632	3.41	.08	.087
Indonesia	UK	612	7.93	.34	<.001
Pakistan	Turkey	586	11.85	.15	.001
Pakistan	UK	566	8.66	.13	.005
Turkey	UK	580	41.34	.27	<.001

Note. *p* values have been adjusted for multiple tests using the Benjamini-Hochberg procedure (Benjamini & Hochberg, 1995).

Meta-Theme 1: Personal Crisis Events

Addiction/Substance Use. This theme relates to the use of alcohol or drugs as a perceived problem in life and as a means of self-medication for emotional distress.

“Repeated worsening of addictions and self-destructive tendencies” Czechia

The Challenge of Adult Independence. This theme captured accounts of feeling that the process of becoming independent and entering adulthood was central to their crisis.

“I am experiencing difficulties regarding my changing environment. Gradually, I feel that my responsibilities are increasing with the maturity of my age and I am getting stressed about that.” Turkey

Ill Health, Injury or Disability. This theme includes all mentions of physical injury or illness, surgery, mental health diagnoses and medication, surgery and problematic weight gain.

“I have faced health problems, which created a crisis in my life. This unexpected health challenge affected my social and financial situation.” Pakistan

Identity Crisis. This theme was not based on a specific event type, but rather captures all the comments about how a sense of identity was thrown into confusion amidst the events of the crisis. This includes losing a sense of identity, changes that relate to religious identity, sexuality, gender or values, negative self-comparisons with others or a sense of an identity that remains partially fused with parents.

“I realized that I am queer, polyamorous, trans, and have autism. At the same time, I abandoned my religion and reevaluated much of my worldview, got into an openly queer relationship, and began a social transition.” Czechia

Residential Difficulties or Transition. This theme contains all issues related to moving homes, cities or countries, including issues of having to travel for long periods or issues that stem from residential transitions. Also, problems with one’s current residential situation were mentioned, such as the discomfort of living in a hostel.

“Starting life in a new country that doesn’t speak my native language.” UK

Uncertain Future Opportunities. This theme is not linked to an event per se but was frequently mentioned in the events narratives. It refers to a sense of uncertainty about next steps and what the future holds, linked to major life events such as not getting a desired job or onto a desired course, or becoming disillusioned with choices.

“My indecisiveness about the hundreds of career opportunities that came my way when I graduated from university, and the uncertainty of the opportunity that the universe would initially give me, began to turn into a crisis.” Turkey

“I feel like I’m at a dead end when I need a change but I don’t know where and how to start, what to do differently. It’s like an engine starting at idle. You need to go, but you have absolutely no idea where and you have no control over anything.” Czechia

“I’m at a point in my life that I see as definitive for my future (who I’ll be and what I want to be). In this regard, I’ve been questioning myself a lot about whether I’m on the right path. At the same time, I feel like I’m not giving my best or what I’d like to give at university, in terms of the opportunities I have now that may be slipping away.” Brazil

Pregnancy/Parenthood. This theme includes mentions of becoming a parent, being pregnant or the challenges of parenting young children. There were few mentions of this given that the typical age of the sample meant that few were likely to have children.

Table 2. External Feature Themes: Percentages by Country, with Three Most Prevalent Themes per Country Shown in Bold Font, and Most Prevalent Theme per Country Highlighted Grey

	UK	Greece	Czechia	Turkey	India	Pakistan	Indonesia	Brazil
Addiction/substance use	0.9	0.0	1.1	0.0	0.0	2.0	1.0	0.0
Bereavement	6.4	6.1	8.4	0.6	6.3	0.0	7.4	2.7
Career transition	21.1	15.2	18.4	14.6	3.8	2.0	22.1	24.8
Challenge of adult independence	13.8	3.0	8.9	13.3	2.5	0.0	10.8	8.0
Family difficulties	22.0	13.6	16.8	10.8	10.0	10.0	23.5	16.8
Financial difficulties	5.5	15.2	13.7	18.4	6.3	12.0	15.2	26.5
Identity crisis events	14.7	3.0	8.4	10.1	1.3	0	1.0	5.3
Ill health, injury or disability inc. mental health	20.2	6.1	12.6	11.4	11.3	10.0	2.9	14.2
Isolation or social disconnection	12.8	9.1	7.4	12.0	5.0	0.0	3.4	7.1
Romantic relationship difficulties	17.4	10.6	32.1	12.7	2.5	2.0	5.4	22.1
Residential difficulties or transition	28.4	18.2	12.1	12.7	3.8	8.0	2.5	13.3
Studying-based stress and struggle	22.9	22.7	32.6	11.4	13.8	20.0	16.2	20.4
Educational transition	23.9	9.1	17.9	5.1	0.0	4.0	5.4	12.4
Uncertain future opportunities	18.3	3.0	22.6	20.9	16.3	8.0	17.6	15.0
Work stress, problems or stasis	14.7	18.2	12.6	11.4	7.5	2.0	4.4	9.7
Political and economic context	0.0	9.1	2.6	9.5	0.0	24.0	0.5	1.8
Friend-based difficulties	9.2	4.5	6.8	7.6	5.0	8.0	6.4	4.4
Pregnancy/Parenthood	0.9	6.1	2.1	2.5	1.3	2.0	0.0	4.4

Note. Percentages are calculated as a proportion of participants within each country who wrote crisis texts.

“The pressure of the environment and myself on expectations of motherhood.” Czechia

Meta-Theme 2: Relational Crisis Events

Bereavement. This theme subsumes all mentions of the death of a family member or friend. These included mentions of suicide. There was also one instance of a pet dying that was included in this theme, as it provoked a bereavement reaction in the participant.

“I have not dealt with my father’s death that took place a year ago.” Greece

Family and Parental Difficulties. This includes issues and challenges that relate to direct family members, usually parents and/or siblings. Some participants wrote about ill health or drug use in family members, as well as demanding or disapproving parents and family conflicts or family breakdown.

“In 2017 I had a big fight with my parents over the issue of faith. I found my true faith and chose to leave college and aspire to become a monk, thinking that to become a monk you don’t have to go to college. After following my true faith, I was advised to stay in college.” Indonesia

Friend-Based Difficulties. Within this theme, we coded all mentions of problems with friends, loss of friends, being ostracised or being alienated by friends.

“I feel that I changed a lot. Before, I trusted everyone so easily but now I changed I don’t make friends easily.” Pakistan

Isolation and Social Disconnection. This includes being away from friends and family, lacking social support, a sense of being alienated and some mentions of the enduring effects of Covid isolation-based measures.

“Being alone most of the time and having no one to talk to.” UK

Romantic Relationship Difficultie. This refers to all mentions of being unable to hold down a stable relationship, relationship break up, volatile relationship and the strain of moving in with one’s partner.

“I cannot break the ties from my old romantic relationship, we have been in and out for years and now it is like it is definitely over.” Turkey

Meta-Theme 3: Study and Work Based Crisis Events

Job Stress, Problems or Stasis. This theme included mentions of work stress, not enjoying work or finding it demotivating/unfulfilling, heavy work demands, having to work in two jobs simultaneously, and problematic behavior by colleagues or boss at work.

“Unable to progress professionally, on the same job for over two years (job which i used to love) however feel that there is nothing more i can learn from and I do not feel appreciated by the manager.” UK

“I started working about 9 months ago in a new job that constantly challenges me and demands a lot from me, both physically and mentally.” Brazil

Studying-Based Stress and Struggle. This theme relates to struggle or being overwhelmed with university workload, feeling that they may be doing the wrong degree or subject, or anxiety over degree outcome.

“Anxiety about college and tiredness because everything coincides with everything...Demands and long hours of study and in a field that doesn’t interest me, but in which I’m forced to work.” Greece

Career Transition. This includes descriptions of attempting to transition into the labor market, transitions between jobs or careers, and periods of unemployment.

“I have started a new job, not in the industry I wanted or trained for, this is a new venture that has caused me anxiety and stress due to learning a new set of skills and rules.” UK

Financial Difficulties. This relates to debt, low or unstable income, not enough money to enjoy life or unwanted financial dependence on parents.

“Being financially dependent on the family, both me and my husband (whom I don’t even feel like calling my husband because we are not independent in our lives and live in the family home), causes various feelings of discomfort, submission, and silence, as well as little autonomy. I feel my identity is shaken every time I need to ask for or endure situations due to financial reasons.” Brazil

Educational Transition. This theme includes references to issues and challenges surrounding either arriving at, leaving or moving between universities (or other educational establishments).

“After failing at one university that I would have enjoyed but couldn’t psychologically handle, I finished my BA at another.” Czechia

Meta Theme 4: Geopolitical Crisis Events

Political and Economic Context. This theme included descriptions of crisis being fuelled by the political situation, perceptions of incompetent government, inflation and broader financial and economic issues within a country, and labour market issues such as high unemployment rates.

“Our government system is very poor specially for poor people”. Pakistan

Internal Crisis Features. There are 12 internal crisis feature themes. Table 3 presents all themes, the frequencies of these in the countries, and the overall mean frequency across all samples. Each theme is briefly described below with example quotes.

Feeling Sad, Numb or Down. This theme captures the range of phrases used to capture feeling down, including mentions of low mood, feeling down, feeling numb, sad and despairing. For example:

“Mostly been feeling a numbness but sometimes despair.” UK

Anger, Frustration and Irritation. This theme captures all descriptions of frustration and irritation, or at the stronger end of this emotive scale, anger and feelings of aggression.

“I often get angry for no apparent reason and I am always angry and feel that everything is futile and useless.” Czechia

Fear, Anxiety and Worry. Under this theme we coded all descriptions of being scared, afraid, anxious or worried by current events or imagined futures.

“Sometimes I feel very restless and anxious, it seems as if something bad is going to happen.” Pakistan

Table 3. Internal Feature Themes: Percentages by Country, with Three Most Prevalent Themes per Country Column Shown in Bold Font, and Most Prevalent Theme per Country Column Highlighted Grey

	UK	Greece	Czechia	Turkey	India	Pakistan	Indonesia	Brazil
Anger, frustration and irritation	16.7	28.1	20.0	15.2	8.3	12.1	22.0	23.9
Feelings of confusion, doubt and uncertainty	23.1	29.7	28.4	26.6	9.7	6.1	29.8	19.5
Exhausted, tired and unmotivated	13.9	12.5	11.6	14.6	6.9	0.0	9.8	18.6
Fearful, anxious and worried	47.2	23.4	38.4	34.2	26.4	27.3	30.7	54.9
Feeling lost, helpless or hopeless	33.3	9.4	44.7	29.7	15.3	6.1	13.7	17.7
Feeling lonely and/or unwanted	22.2	17.2	13.2	8.9	11.1	3.0	5.9	11.5
Negative self-evaluations	48.1	31.3	50.5	25.9	20.8	24.2	28.8	55.8
Other negative emotions	18.5	9.4	8.9	5.1	13.9	9.1	12.7	10.6
Positive emotions or appraisals	8.3	20.3	9.5	26.6	13.9	13.1	9.8	15.0
Feeling sad or down	41.7	35.9	31.6	35.4	22.2	15.2	41.0	38.9
Stressed, pressured and overwhelmed	30.6	54.7	11.6	23.4	15.3	9.1	7.3	19.5
Suicidal ideation	6.5	1.6	4.2	0.6	6.9	3.0	3.9	3.5

Note. Percentages are calculated as a proportion of participants within each country who wrote crisis texts.

Other Negative Emotions (Guilt, Regret, Jealousy, Being Upset). There were rare mentions of other negative emotions such as guilt, regret, jealousy, being upset, or being unstable (in a negative sense). These mentions of other negative emotions were coded into a single theme.

“I feel..a little bit of regret for the wrong decisions.” Turkey

Positive Emotions and Appraisals. This theme captures any mention of feeling positive, optimistic, happy or excited.

“I still find things worth living and striving for despite everything and trying to be positive by taking refuge in my faith and my family.” Turkey

Negative Self-Evaluation. This commonly cited theme captures all the phrases and comments that participants made in which they convey a negative evaluation of themselves. This includes phrases such as feeling useless or worthless, being not good enough, feeling like a failure, a sense of self-loathing, self-hatred, or just a lack of confidence.

“I feel like I’m worthless, i can’t do anything. I won’t be able to graduate either. I won’t be able to complete my dissertation and i will end up as a failure. I can’t make friends because I’m incapable of it. i can’t be in relationships because I bring out the worst in them.” India

“I’m not strong enough, I’m weak, inconsistent.” Brazil

Feelings of Stress and Pressure. This theme includes all mentions of being stressed, feeling under pressure and feeling overwhelmed.

“Stressed out - Not knowing if I’ll be good enough for the job market in my field I’ve chosen.” UK

Feeling Lost, Helpless or Hopeless. Within this theme, we included all descriptions of feeling that life has no meaning or point, of feeling lost or helpless, or of feeling doomed or hopeless.

“What is the point in life? I’m so tired of everything.” UK

“I felt helpless at times, as if I had no direction, didn’t know where to go next.” Czechia

Feelings of Confusion, Doubt and Uncertainty. This theme captures accounts of feeling confused by what to do with life, a doubt or uncertainly over future direction. It is less severe in tone than the prior theme; the tone is more being unsure than being lost.

“The thoughts I have are usually questioning what I am going to do about my life and how to come out of the slump I am currently in.” UK

Exhausted, Tired and Unmotivated. Under this theme, we included all cognitive-affective descriptions of feeling tired, exhausted, burnt out, demotivated and unmotivated.

“I have been feeling constantly tired, lazy and demotivated.” UK

Feeling Lonely and/or Unwanted. This theme captures feelings and appraisals of being lonely, alone, excluded, alienated and of being an outsider.

“I feel like there is no person who really cares about me. I feel alone even though I have people around me.” Greece

Suicidal Ideation. In all countries surveyed, a small minority of participants conveyed suicidal ideation.

“I often think about finding another partner, an impossible career change due to circumstances and myself, or ending my life.” Czechia

“I think about how much I would like to get hit by a car and suffer from complete amnesia. Or better yet die.” Greece

Discussion

Our quantitative and qualitative findings both contribute evidence to the proposition that early adult crisis is a common phenomenon that occurs in all participating countries that has some cross-culturally applicable features but also culturally specific features too. The quantitative findings provide prevalence estimates that contextualize the more in-depth presentation of the qualitative findings. Our descriptive-statistical hypothesis on crisis prevalence was that in all countries, over 30% of the sample would assess themselves as currently being in a developmental crisis. Prevalence rates of crisis in the study varied significantly across the participating countries, ranging from 40% in Greece, 44% in the UK, and up to 70% in Turkey and 77% in Indonesia. Our data broadly fit with existing prevalence data, such as Herawati and Hidayat (2020), Millová and Svárovská (2020), Riyanto and Arimi (2021) and Yeler et al. (2021). While Robinson et al. (2017) found only 22% crisis episode prevalence, that study included a wider age range (20–39) and included a mid-point “maybe” option that was not included in the prevalence estimate, whereas the current study opted for a binary agree/disagree assessment.

The differences in cross-country prevalence may relate to contextual socio-economic factors. In Turkey, for example, which had a prevalence of 70%, the political and social climate for young people has been reported to be challenging in recent years (Çağlar & Çağlar, 2022) due to political polarisation, increased unemployment among young people, plus higher NEET (not in employment, education or training) rates (OECD, 2024). In Indonesia, which had a prevalence of 77%, there are also relatively high rates of youth unemployment, and issues in lack of graduate-level work availability for those who go to university, which is salient to the current study

given the high number of students in the sample (Watters, 2023). Gender norms and roles may also restrict women's opportunities in Indonesia, according to Yarrow and Afkar (2020). In Brazil, crises relate to great socioeconomic disparities and high rates of unemployment and NEET conditions, especially among young people, particularly socially disadvantaged groups (blacks, indigenous people) (IBGE, 2024; Dutra-Thomé & Koller, 2019). Compared to the other countries in the sample, the European countries in the sample (UK and Greece) have a more stable political and economic situation (Fragile States Index, 2024), and there is corresponding evidence of general optimism in emerging adults about their future (Galanaki & Sideridis, 2018; UCL, 2024). This may help to explain the lower prevalence rates of crisis in Greece and the UK.

The prevalence of crisis episodes across the eight countries reflects the fact that the features of crisis that were found from the qualitative phase are common experiences, such as educational transitions, study struggles, issues with self-evaluation/self-esteem and family challenges. The qualitative analysis established that the same set of themes was sufficient for coding 90% or more of qualitative content in all countries, due to descriptions of crisis across countries containing similar overall sets of external and internal features. This supports the theoretical proposition posed at the outset of this research that early adult crisis is an expression of developmental life-stage-specific phenomena that exist during the emerging adult life stage across cultures (Erikson, 1968; Nelson, 2021).

The most common external crisis features across countries were *Career transition*, *Studying-based struggle and stress*, *Uncertain future opportunities*, *Financial difficulties* and *Family difficulties*. These themes fit with existing theory and research on early adult crisis and quarter-life crisis. For example, the *Career transition* theme was predominantly coded for comments about the transition from education to work, and previous work has found that crisis occurs during the transition from higher education to work (Robinson et al., 2020). The *Family difficulties* theme relates to existing research that found a negative relationship between family functioning and quarter-life crisis (Korah, 2022), and also to previous research on how crisis relates to the challenge of renegotiating relationships with parents from parent-to-child to adult-to-adult (Robinson, 2019). The *Financial difficulties* theme links to the prior finding that this features as a common theme in early adult crisis in a representative UK sample (Robinson & Wright, 2013).

For the UK the most common external feature theme was *Residential Difficulties*. This partly relates to describing the challenges of migrants moving to the UK and settling down residentially. Of all the countries included in this study, the UK gets the highest number of incoming migrants, so the theme may reflect this cultural situation (World Population Review, 2024). In Pakistan, *Political and Economic Context* emerged as the most common theme. Comments coded under this theme mostly focus on the issue of inflation within the country, and a general state of financial/economic crisis that impacts on

participants' lives and creates individual crisis, along with comments about perceived poor governance. Pakistan has a relatively high inflation rate in comparison with other countries, and also ranks the lowest of the countries surveyed for GDP-per-capita, which in turn may reflect in descriptions of crisis often being related to economic issues. This fits with other research that has found a link between political and economic challenges on mental health and wellbeing in Pakistan (Ahmad et al., 2022; Shaikh et al., 2024). For Indonesia, the most common theme was *Family Difficulties*. Comments coded within this theme include demanding parents, family conflict, and also economic family issues such as having to provide financially for parents. This may reflect the fact that in Indonesia, the nuclear and extended family plays a central role in decision-making on family-related matters, including education, career, partner, and faith (Riany et al., 2016). Furthermore, a lot of Indonesian adults still live with their parents or in-laws even after they get married or have a job. This situation may explain why family difficulties are prominent in early adult crisis (Shulman & Connolly, 2013).

Moving on to internal features of crisis, *Fearful, anxious and worried* was the most common internal theme when combined across countries. This fits with previous findings that uncertainty and anxiety about the future are central components of early adult crisis (Agarwal et al., 2020; Duara et al., 2021; Suyono et al., 2021; Zibrinyiová & Ráčzová, 2016). *Negative self-evaluation* was also a particularly common theme across countries, being the top theme in the UK, Brazil and Czechia, and in the top three themes in two other countries. This finding relates to existing theory on the role of the self in the dynamics of early adult crisis (Robinson & Smith, 2010c), and to emerging adulthood as a life stage (Nelson, 2021). Another internal theme that was common across all countries was *Feeling sad or down*. In Turkey and Indonesia, this was the most common theme. In previous research, this feeling is associated with feeling locked out of opportunity and with a sense of being rejected by others (Robinson, 2019). The finding also links to the finding by Petrov et al. (2022), which found a strong positive correlation between developmental crisis and depressive symptoms. It also links to how if a young person appraises that they have not or will not achieve their goals, they may feel down or depressed (Çok et al., 2023).

In sum, the conception of early adult/quarter-life crisis that emerges from our qualitative analysis fits well with existing theories of early adult crisis and with theories of emerging adulthood (e.g., Robinson et al., 2013). The picture that emerges from the cross-cultural data is one of crisis episodes being times of multiple disruptive transitional events, such as the transition from education to work, moving to a new city or country, family or relationship difficulties, along with struggles to gain psychological and financial independence, which together challenge coping strategies. Alongside these external features are internal struggles with identity, purpose, uncertainty and negative emotion. Early adult crises were often descriptively framed in cultural and socio-economic contexts, particularly when such contexts were perceived as limiting or

problematic, hence as driving the crisis. One of the most salient features of the qualitative findings that has not yet been addressed by other studies on early adult crisis is the preponderance of negative self-evaluation, which emerged as a common feature of descriptions of crisis across all countries. This fits with the self-focus of emerging adulthood, manifesting in a maladaptive form (Nelson, 2021). Exploring the links between life events, crisis, emotions and these negative self-evaluations is an important direction for future research.

Limitations and Future Research

There are limitations to the current study that should be noted, each of which points to a corresponding opportunity for future research. Firstly, the samples from each country are composed mainly of students, having been partly recruited via the university contacts of the research teams in each country (as well as via alumni networks and other channels). The advantage of this is that it adds a level of demographic comparability to the samples. However, it also limits the generalisability of our findings, given that they relate predominantly to the experiences of those in a specific socio-economic situation and age group. Future research could move past this limitation by aiming to compare (a) university students with non-students, (b) those in the 18–24 age range with the 25–30 age range, and (c) genders, to explore the systematic differences between these groups in crisis features, prevalence and correlates. We intentionally didn't compare genders in the current study in order to focus on the relative prevalence of crisis overall, without leading to Type 1 error risk by doubling the number of tests, and also in order to establish a general thematic structure within each country, prior to future research that could compare genders within each country. Purposive sampling of approximately equal numbers of male and female participants for future studies that aim to compare genders will help to ensure robust comparisons.

Another limitation in our data collection was the relatively high rate of non-response to some demographic questions including gender. This is likely due to the practical matter of locating demographic questions at the end of the questionnaire, and some participants not completing that final page of the questionnaire. In future studies, this can be remedied by locating demographic questions at the beginning of the questionnaire and by including more online prompts to ensure participants are aware of when they have reached the end of the survey.

Our assessment of crisis in this study was done using the vignette form of assessment that gives participants a definition of crisis and asks them to endorse the presence or lack of crisis in their life. A functional benefit of this binary response format for the current study is that, being a categorical variable, it gives a prevalence estimate. It also facilitates for participants who gave a "yes" answer to then be funnelled to the qualitative questions about the crisis. A limitation is that it does not provide for internal reliability estimates such as Cronbach's alpha. Future research could also explore crisis using a scaled measure such as the Developmental Crisis Questionnaire, which has three subscales

(Disconnection and Distress, Lack of Clarity and Control, Transition and Turning Point), to assess crisis as a continuous variable and as a multi-dimensional construct (Petrov et al., 2022). While this measure would not have met the needs of the current study, in other studies it will provide important cross-cultural data on the relative mean levels of, and correlative predictors/outcomes of, developmental crisis in early adulthood.

A limitation of working across multiple languages is that meanings of words will vary following translation to some degree. For example, if translated key words within the crisis assessment measure vary across some languages in terms of implied intensity, such that one word is slightly less intense/extreme than the other, this can affect the likelihood of a person endorsing the definition and self-assessing as being in crisis, which in turn could affect the prevalence rate. Similarly, there is a chance that differences in qualitative thematising may reflect linguistic differences, for example the theme *Stressed, pressured and overwhelmed* was more prevalent than *Fearful, anxious and worried* in the Greek sample, while *Fearful, anxious and worried* was more common than *Stressed, pressured and overwhelmed* in all the other samples. This could in principle relate to linguistic subtleties surrounding stress and anxiety, such that a word that was coded as stress in Greek was coded as anxiety in other languages. However, while this difficulty is inherent to cross-cultural research, it is worth taking on for the benefits that such multi-country work brings, and the risk of it is offset by rigorous translation and back-translation processes, such as those that we conducted.

Finally, the nature of the qualitative data in the current study was brief written data, which provided for gathering concise descriptions of crisis across thousands of participants in many countries but lacked the depth and nuance of interview data. Further studies on early adult crisis across countries and counties, such as the work by Duara et al. (2021) that compared English and Assamese individuals via interview data, are warranted.

Practical Implications

Periods of developmental crisis are appropriate times for psychological intervention, given that they are periods in which individuals have heightened curiosity towards themselves and the external world (Robinson et al., 2017), and during which they may well be actively seeking solutions to improve their life and wellbeing (Slaikeu, 1990). There is the potential for intervention in both the external features of crisis and internal features of crisis. For example, in terms of externally focused interventions, career-focused coaching can support young adults in managing the transition from education to career, by way of developing life skills that may not have been taught in school or university. As an example of this kind of coaching service in the UK, QuarterLife (<https://www.quarter-life.co.uk/>) provides one-to-one and group coaching for individuals who appraise that they may be going through a quarter-life crisis (i.e. early adult crisis). Also, in terms of intervening to alleviate the distressing internal features of

crisis such as anxiety, confusion and feelings of being down, group-based resilience training can help support young adults in cultivating emotion regulation skills that can help young people to navigate through the emotional upheaval of early adult crisis (e.g., Chandler et al., 2015). Given the high prevalence of negative self-evaluation across all countries in our data, we propose that techniques for enhancing self-esteem should be a priority focus for educators, therapists or other clinicians working with young adults (Langford et al., 2022). Another frequent theme mentioned was the challenge of transitioning into or out of higher education. Based on this, we propose that higher education institutions could invest in courses to support wellbeing for new arrivals at university and for those leaving university to move into a work environment (Robinson et al., 2020). In summary, the implications of the current research are that the need for such support services to young adults extends across all the countries studied and beyond. Developing and sharing support strategies and resources across countries, while modifying such services to support cultural differences, may allow for the development of empirically supported and cross-culturally valid services for helping young adults through this highly challenging part of the lifespan that can support young adults around the world.

ORCID iDs

Oliver C. Robinson  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6758-2223>
 Georgios Vleioras  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-6076-5572>
 H. Kübra Özdoğan  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-4905-7123>
 Zehra Yeler  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-8192-6504>
 Kübra Berber  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0758-1736>
 Katarina Millova  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3429-4652>
 Luciana Dutra-Thomé  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9629-467X>
 Maria Nugraheni Mardi Rahayu  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7668-1813>
 Afinnisa Rasyida  <https://orcid.org/0009-0005-5444-8358>
 Nindya Putri Aprodita  <https://orcid.org/0009-0009-9999-6875>
 Shefali Mishra  <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9973-5474>
 Irimi Dermitzaki  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8363-7709>
 Anastasia Spyrou  <https://orcid.org/0009-0003-9877-8792>
 Emmanouela Mante  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-9917-6812>

Funding

The authors received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Transparency and Openness Statement



The raw qualitative and quantitative data, the coded qualitative data, and the thematic analysis scheme used in this manuscript are openly

available, and can be accessed at the Open Science Framework [url to be provided on acceptance]. No aspects of the study were pre-registered.

Supplemental Material

Supplemental material for this article is available online.

References

- Agarwal, S., Guntuku, S., Robinson, O. C., Dunn, A., & Ungar, L. (2020). Examining the phenomenon of quarter-life crisis through artificial intelligence and the language of Twitter. *Frontiers in Psychology, 11*, 341. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00341>
- Ahmad, S. S., & Koncsol, S. W. (2022). Cultural factors influencing mental health stigma: Perceptions of mental illness (POMI) in Pakistani emerging adults. *Religions, 13*(5), 401. <https://doi.org/10.1177/10497315241307615>
- Alfaruqy, M. Z., & Indrawati, E. S. (2023). Experience rising from quarter-life crisis: A phenomenology study. *Jurnal Psikologi, 22*(1), 57–68. <https://doi.org/10.14710/jp.22.1.57-68>
- Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist, 55*(5), 469–480. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.5.469>
- Arnett, J. J. (2007). The long and leisurely route: Coming of age in Europe today. *Current History, 106*(698), 130–136. <https://doi.org/10.1525/curh.2007.106.698.130>
- Arnett, J. J., Žukauskienė, R., & Sugimurac, K. (2014). The new life stage of emerging adulthood at ages 18–29 years: Implications for mental health. *The Lancet Psychiatry, 1*(7), 569–576. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366\(14\)00080-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2215-0366(14)00080-7)
- Benjamini, Y., & Hochberg, Y. (1995). Controlling the false discovery rate: A practical and powerful approach to multiple testing. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society - Series B: Statistical Methodology, 57*(1), 289–300. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.2517-6161.1995.tb02031.x>
- Boyatzis, R. E. (1998). *Transforming qualitative information: Thematic analysis and code development*. Sage Publishing.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology, 3*(2), 77–101. <https://doi.org/10.1191/1478088706qp063oa>
- Çağlar, A., & Çağlar, T. (2022). *Turkish youth research - 2021*. <https://www.kas.de/en/web/tuerkei/single-title/-/content/turkish-youth-2021-1>
- Caplan, G. (1964). *Principles of preventive psychiatry*. Basic Books.
- Chandler, G. E., Roberts, S. J., & Chiodo, L. (2015). Resilience intervention for young adults with adverse childhood experiences. *Journal of the American Psychiatric Nurses Association, 21*(6), 406–416. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1078390315620609>
- Choudhury, A., & Raghavan, S. (2014). The Indian context of emerging adulthood: Perspectives from India. *International Journal of Psychology, 49*(1), 43–54. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ijop.12047>
- Çok, F., & Atak, H. (2015). Emerging adulthood in Turkey: Does it (yet) exist? *The Online Journal of Counseling and Education, 4*(3), 46–75. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21676968211054600>

- Çok, F., Özdoğan, H. K., Berber, K., & Yeler, Z. (2023). Yetişkinliğe geçiş sürecinde gelişimsel bir kriz: Çeyrek yaşam krizi [A developmental crisis in transition to adulthood: Quarter-life crisis]. *Humanistic Perspective*, 5(2), 898–920. <https://doi.org/10.47793/hp.1253697>
- Creswell, J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2017). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Sage Publications.
- Dąbrowski, K. (1964). *Positive disintegration*. Little Brown Publishers.
- Duara, R., Hugh-Jones, S., & Madill, A. (2021). ‘Forced adulthood’: An aspect of ‘quarterlife crisis’ suffered by young English and Assamese adults. *Qualitative Studies*, 6(1), 11–37. <https://doi.org/10.7146/qs.v6i1.124407>
- Dutra-Thomé, L., & Koller, S. H. (2019). Emerging adulthood features in Brazilians from differing socioeconomic status. *Acta de Investigación Psicológica*, 9(3), 56–66. <https://doi.org/10.22201/fpsi.20074719e.2019.3.322>
- Erikson, E. H. (1968). *Identity, youth and crisis*. Norton.
- Forer, B. R. (1963). The therapeutic value of crisis. *Psychological Reports*, 13(1), 275–281. <https://doi.org/10.2466/pr0.1963.13.1.275>
- Fragile States Index. (2024). *Global data of the fragile states index*. <https://fragilestatesindex.org/global-data/>
- Galanaki, E., & Sideridis, G. (2018). Dimensions of emerging adulthood, criteria for adulthood, and identity development in Greek studying youth: A person-centered approach. *Emerging Adulthood*, 7(6), 411–431. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696818777040>
- Hasyim, F. F., Setyowibowo, H., & Purba, F. D. (2024). Factors contributing to quarter life crisis on early adulthood: A systematic literature review. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management*, 17, 1–12. <https://doi.org/10.2147/PRBM.S438866>
- Herawati, I., & Hidayat, A. (2020). Quarter life crisis pada masa dewasa awa di Pekanbaru. *Journal An-Nafs: Kajian Penelitian Psikologi*, 5(2), 145–156. <https://doi.org/10.33367/psi.v5i2.1036>
- IBGE Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE). (2024). *National household sample survey (continuous PNAD)*.
- Jamain, R. R., Sari, N. P., & Ningrum, S. M. (2023). *Benarkah terjadi fase quarter life crisis pada mahasiswa? AGCAF* (pp. 133–137). Annual Guidance and Counseling Academic Forum.
- Korah, E. C. T. (2022). The role of family functioning in the quarter life crisis in early adulthood during the Covid-19 pandemic. *Jurnal Psikologi Talenta*, 7(2), 53–61. <https://doi.org/10.26858/talenta.v7i1.27184>
- Langford, K., McMullen, K., Bridge, L., Rai, L., Smith, P., & Rimes, K. A. (2022). A cognitive behavioural intervention for low self-esteem in young people who have experienced stigma, prejudice, or discrimination: An uncontrolled acceptability and feasibility study. *Psychology and Psychotherapy*, 95(1), 34–56. <https://doi.org/10.1111/papt.12361>
- Levinson, D. J. (1978). *The seasons of a man's life*. Ballantine books.
- Levinson, D. J. (1996). *The seasons of a woman's life*. Ballantine books.
- Macek, P., Ježek, S., Lacinová, L., Bouša, O., Kvitkovičová, L., Michalčáková, R. N., & Širůček, J. (2016). Emerging adults in the Czech Republic: Views into and across different domains of life. In R. Žukauskienė (Ed.), *Emerging adulthood in a European context* (pp. 175–201). Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group.
- Marcia, J. E. (1993). The ego identity status approach to ego identity. In J. E. Marcia, A. S. Waterman, D. R. Matteson, S. L. Archer, & J. L. Orlofsky (Eds.), *Ego identity: A handbook for psychosocial research* (pp. 3–21). Springer Verlag.
- Millová, K., & Svárovská, Š. (2020). Quarter-life crisis, its occurrence and predictors in Czech young adults. *Psychologie a její kontexty*, 11(2), 73–90. <https://doi.org/10.15452/PsyX.2020.11.0011>
- Mitra, D., & Arnett, J. J. (2021). Life choices of emerging adults in India. *Emerging Adulthood*, 9(3), 229–239. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696819851891>
- Moffitt, T. E. (1993). Adolescence-limited and life-course-persistent antisocial behavior: A developmental taxonomy. *Psychological Review*, 100(4), 674–701. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-295X.100.4.674>
- Nelson, L. J. (2021). The theory of emerging adulthood 20 years later: A look at where it has taken us, what we know now, and where we need to go. *Emerging Adulthood*, 9(3), 179–188. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696820950884>
- Numan, A., Muazzam, A., & Arnett, J. J. (2024). Dimensions of emerging adulthood in Pakistan: A demographic profile. *Journal of Adult Development*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10804-024-09493-8>
- Petrov, N., Robinson, O. C., & Arnett, J. (2022). The developmental crisis questionnaire (DCQ-12): Psychometric development and validation. *Journal of Adult Development*, 29(4), 265–278. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10804-022-09403-w>
- Ranganathan, M., Telang, S., & Antony, J. A. (2022). Quarter-life crisis during the pandemic: Career indecision, intolerance of uncertainty and mental well-being in emerging adults. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 11(4), 2648. <https://doi.org/10.25215/1104.248>
- Riany, Y. E., Meredith, P., & Cuskelly, M. (2016). Understanding the influence of traditional cultural values on Indonesian parenting. *Marriage & Family Review*, 53(3), 207–226. <https://doi.org/10.1080/01494929.2016.1157561>
- Riyanto, A., & Arini, D. P. (2021). Analisis deskriptif quarter-life crisis pada lulusan perguruan tinggi Universitas Katolik Musi Charitas. *Jurnal Psikologi Malahayati*, 3(1), 12–19. <https://doi.org/10.33024/jpm.v3i1.3316>
- Robinson, O. C. (2015). Emerging adulthood, early adulthood and quarter-life crisis: Updating Erikson for the twenty-first century. In R. Žukauskiene (Ed.), *Emerging adulthood in a European context* (pp. 17–30). Routledge.
- Robinson, O. C. (2019). A longitudinal mixed-methods case study of quarter-life crisis in a university graduate: Locked-out and locked-in forms in combination. *Emerging Adulthood*, 7(3), 167–179. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696818764144>
- Robinson, O. C. (2022). Thematic analysis for brief texts: The structured tabular approach. *Qualitative Psychology*, 9(2), 194–208. <https://doi.org/10.1037/qp0000189>
- Robinson, O. C., Cimporescu, M., & Thompson, T. (2020). Well-being, developmental crisis and residential status in the year

- after graduating from higher education: A 12-month longitudinal study. *Journal of Adult Development*, 28(2), 138–148. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10804-020-09361-1>
- Robinson, O. C., Demetre, J. D., & Litman, J. A. (2017). Adult life stage and crisis as predictors of curiosity and authenticity: Testing inferences from Erikson's lifespan theory. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 41(3), 426–431. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025416645201>
- Robinson, O. C., & Smith, J. A. (2010b). Investigating the form and dynamics of crisis episodes in early adulthood: The application of a composite qualitative method. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 7(2), 170–191. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14780880802699084>
- Robinson, O. C., & Smith, J. A. (2010c). The stormy search for self in early adulthood: Developmental crisis and the dissolution of dysfunctional personae. *The Humanistic Psychologist*, 38(2), 120–145. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08873267.2010.485916>
- Robinson, O. C., & Smith, J. A. (2010a). A case study of pre-midlife crisis: An extraordinary transformational episode in an ordinary life. In D. Robinson (Ed.), *Narrative, memory and ordinary lives* (pp. 145–157): University of Huddersfield Press.
- Robinson, O. C., & Wright, G. R. T. (2013). The prevalence, types and perceived outcomes of crisis episodes in early adulthood and midlife: A structured retrospective-autobiographical study. *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 37(5), 407–416. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0165025413492464>
- Robinson, O. C., Wright, G. R. T., & Smith, J. A. (2013). The holistic phase model of early adult crisis. *Journal of Adult Development*, 20(1), 27–37. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10804-013-9153-y>
- Setterstein, R., & Ray, B. E. (2010). *Not quite adults: Why 20-Somethings are choosing a slower path to adulthood, and why it's good for everyone*. Bantam Books.
- Shaikh, A. A., Khuhro, A. A., & Kolachi, M. R. (2024). Understanding the dynamics of human security, terrorism and sustainable peace in Pakistan. *Perennial Journal of History*, 5(1), 118–128. <https://doi.org/10.52700/pjh.v5i1.184>
- Shulman, S., & Connolly, J. (2013). The challenge of romantic relationships in emerging adulthood: Reconceptualization of the field. *Emerging Adulthood*, 1(1), 27–39. <https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696812467330>
- Slaikeu, K. A. (1990). *Crisis intervention – A handbook for practice and research* (2nd ed.). Allyn & Bacon.
- Suyono, T. A., Kumalasari, A. D., & Fitriana, E. (2021). Hubungan quarter-life crisis dengan subjective well-being pada individu dewasa muda. *Jurnal Psikologi*, 14(2), 301–322. <https://doi.org/10.35760/psi.2021.v14i2.4646>
- Terry, G., & Braun, V. (2017). Short but often sweet: The surprising potential of qualitative survey methods. In V. Braun, V.V. Clarke, & D. Gray (Eds.), *Collecting qualitative data: A practical guide to textual, media and virtual techniques* (pp. 15–44). Cambridge University Press.
- Tsang, S., Royse, C. F., & Terkawi, A. S. (2017). Guidelines for developing, translating, and validating a questionnaire in perioperative and pain medicine. *Saudi Journal of Anaesthesia*, 11(Suppl 1), S80–S89. https://doi.org/10.4103/sja.SJA_203_17
- UCL. (2024). *Hope and optimism on the rise among young people*. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/brain-sciences/news/2024/mar/hope-and-optimism-rise-among-young-people>
- Vleioras, G., & Galanaki, E. P. (2024). Comparison of adulthood criteria endorsed by emerging adults and their parents in Greece: A mixed-method study. *The Journal of Genetic Psychology*, 185(2), 366–372. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00221325.2024.2316802>
- Watters, E. (2023). *Youth poverty in Indonesia*. <https://borgenproject.org/youth-poverty-in-indonesia/>
- World Population Review. (2024). *Immigration by country 2024*. <https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/immigration-by-country>
- Yarrow, N., & Afkar, R. (2020). *Gender and education in Indonesia: Progress with more work to be done*. <https://blogs.worldbank.org/en/eastasiapacific/gender-and-education-indonesia-progress-more-work-be-done>
- Yeler, Z., Berber, K., Özdoğan, H. K., & Çök, F. (2021). Quarter life crisis among emerging adults in Turkey and its relationship with intolerance of uncertainty. *Turkish Psychological Counseling and Guidance Journal*, 11(61), 245–262. <https://dergipark.org.tr/tr/pub/tpdrd/issue/63470/960767>
- Zibrinyiová, V., & Ráczová, B. (2016). Quarterlife crisis: A new phenomenon? *Psychologie a její kontexty*, 7(2), 3–14. <https://doaj.org/article/93299893f8f04626b1af747e6b1ef269>

Author Biographies

Oliver C. Robinson is an Associate Professor of Psychology at the University of Greenwich. His research expertise is in adult development, emerging adulthood, developmental crisis, life transitions, psychedelics, cross-cultural methods and qualitative methods. He is the author of the books *Development through Adulthood* and *Paths Between Head and Heart*.

Nikolay Petrov holds an MSc in Experimental Methods in Psychology from the University of Oxford, UK. He is currently a Ph.D. candidate (Psychology) at the University of Cambridge, where he studies large language models and their use in the social sciences. He is the lead author of a widely used psychometric measure of adult developmental crisis.

Georgios Vleioras is Assistant Professor of Developmental Psychology at the University of Thessaly in Greece. His research interests include identity, transition to adulthood (with an emphasis on perceived adulthood criteria) and admiration. Most of his research takes place in Greece but he is open to international collaborations.

Figen Çök is a Professor of Educational Psychology in the Program of Guidance and Psychological Counseling at Başkent University. She is the founding president and chairperson of the board of the “Adolescence and Youth Research Association” in Turkey. Between 2014 and 2016, she was the president of the European Association for

Research on Adolescence. Her research interests are identity development, psychosocial issues, and transition to adulthood.

H. Kübra Özdoğan is a research assistant in the Guidance and Psychological Counseling program at Başkent University. She completed her Master's degree in Psychological Counseling and Guidance and is currently pursuing her Ph.D. in the same field. Her research interests include emerging adulthood, transition to adulthood, and career counseling.

Zehra Yeler is a research assistant in the Guidance and Psychological Counseling at TED University. She earned her Masters degree from Gazi University and is pursuing a Ph.D. in the same field. Her research focuses on emerging adulthood, developmental crises, psychological flexibility, and counselor education.

Kübra Berber is a research assistant in the Guidance and Psychological Counseling program at Ankara University, where she completed her master's and continues her doctoral studies. Her research focuses on emerging adulthood and quarter-life crisis. She was also a project assistant in a UNICEF-funded project on social-emotional development and life skills and continues her work in this field.

Katarina Millova is an Assistant Professor at the University of Ostrava, Czechia. Her research focuses on adult development during emerging and established adulthood, with a particular emphasis on factors contributing to successful development across these life stages. Her work explores various aspects of well-being and ill-being in young and middle adulthood. In addition to international research related to the quarter-life crisis, she is involved in the several other international collaborations.

Saba Sajjad is an Assistant Professor at Department of Clinical Psychology, International Institute of Science, Arts, and Technology, Pakistan. Her research themes include family relationships, intergenerational dynamics, and well-being of young adults. Dr. Saba Sajjad is skilled in quantitative research methods, including psychometrics, multi-group modeling, and statistical analysis.

Luciana Dutra-Thomé is Associate Professor at the Psychology Department of the Federal University of Bahia. Her research themes are transition to adulthood, emerging adulthood, developmental crisis, positive youth development, life and work meaning, life project and qualitative methods. She edited the books *Racism and Human Development* (published by Springer) and *Emerging Adulthood in Brazil* (published by Vetor).

Maria Nugraheni Mardi Rahayu is a Social Psychologist and Lecturer at Satya Wacana Christian University. Her research interests include college students' adjustment, mental health, and adult development, particularly the factors contributing to optimal well-being. While her current research primarily focuses on the Indonesian population, she is also interested in cross-cultural studies and open to collaboration.

Afinnisa Rasyida is a Clinical Psychologist and Lecturer in the Psychology Department at the University of Surabaya. For the past six years, her research has primarily focused on psychological help-seeking, well-being, and mental health issues, particularly among college and high school students in Indonesia. She has a key focus on cross-cultural collaboration.

Nindya Putri Aprodita is a Clinical Psychologist and lecturer at Bunda Mulia University with research interests in mental health and well-being. Her current research primarily focuses on the Indonesian population, but she is also interested in cross-cultural studies and open to collaboration.

Shefali Mishra is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Christ University, Bangalore (India). Her research focuses on developmental psychology, emerging adulthood, adolescent mental health, and counselling psychology. She is actively involved in community extension projects focused on enhancing life skills among school students from underprivileged backgrounds.

Payal Sharma is an Assistant Professor of Psychology at Christ University. Her research focuses on adult development, emerging adulthood, developmental crises, and college students' adjustment and mental health. She is particularly interested in factors contributing to optimal well-being.

Akancha Srivastava is an Associate Professor of Psychology at the Jindal School of Psychology and Counselling. She is an experienced academician with a demonstrated history of working in the education industry. Her areas of interest are organizational behavior, positive psychology, environment and sustainability, mindful consumption, and developmental psychology.

Irini Dermitzaki is Professor in Educational Psychology at the Department of Early Childhood Education, University of Thessaly, Greece. Her research interests include the development of adolescents' and university students' cognitive, motivational, and affective attributes and their adaptation during academic transitions. She is experienced in psychological assessment and in educational counselling of students of a wide age range.

Anastasia Spyrou is a Ph.D. Candidate in Developmental Psychology and a tutor at the University of Thessaly in Greece, teaching English for academic and special purposes. Her research interests include the study of coping skills in preadolescent children through a narrative lens and the impact of sociocultural factors on human development.

Emmanouela Mante holds a degree in Primary Education from the University of Thessaly, Greece, and a Master's degree in Lesson Design and Teaching Material Development in Contemporary Learning Environments from the same university. Since her early student years she has developed a strong interest in developmental psychology and has participated in research related to parenting and identity development. Her broader

research interests include identity formation, professional development, and contemporary approaches to teaching and learning.

Ume Laila is Professor of Psychology and Dean of the School of Arts and Social Sciences at GIFT University, Pakistan. Her areas of expertise include capacity building and emerging

issues of adults. Dr. Laila has her expertise in psychometrics and statistical analysis.

Amy Fisher is an Assistant Psychologist in the South London and Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust. Her research focuses on life transitions, adult development and mental health in younger and older adults.